

**California Department of Education**  
**Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction**



# Elementary Education Newsletter

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## Greetings from the Superintendent...

This issue of the *Elementary Education Newsletter* addresses topics for the winter months and beyond. The articles in this edition focus on the science textbook adoption, health standards, HIV/AIDS education in elementary schools, Evergreen School, California Teachers of the Year for 2007, the 2007 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools, and resources to assist schools to prepare for a possible pandemic.

The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce released the Tough Choices or Tough Times report in December 2006. I commend the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce for this important contribution to the national discussion on what it will take to prepare students to succeed in a global economy. The commission makes several provocative and far-reaching recommendations. I have already embraced some of their recommendations, such as the establishment of quality universal preschool and increasing both rigor and relevance in the classroom. Other ideas advanced in the report are currently under consideration by researchers and education policymakers, such as new ways of funding our schools to ensure both the adequacy and efficiency of resources. The executive summary of the report is posted on the Commission's Web site at <http://www.skillscommission.org>.

Today, all students must have the rigorous academic foundation once reserved only for the college-bound, and all

must be prepared to be lifelong learners, creative problem solvers, and analytical thinkers. This year I plan to focus as never before on closing the achievement gap between our high performers and those students struggling the most. This gap endangers the futures of far too many students.

Thank you for all of your hard work, diligence, and attention to providing the best educational opportunities for the students of California in 2006. I look forward to continued successes and improvements in 2007.

JACK O'CONNELL

## 2006 Science Primary Adoption

On November 9, 2006, the California State Board of Education (SBE) took action to adopt science instructional materials for kindergarten through grade eight. The following programs were adopted by the SBE:

PUBLISHER	PROGRAM TITLE	GRADE LEVEL(S)
CPO Science	<i>Focus on Earth, Life, and Physical Science</i>	6, 7, 8
Delta Education	<i>Full Option Science System</i>	K–5
Glencoe/McGraw-Hill	<i>Glencoe Science Focus On Series</i>	6, 7, 8
Harcourt School Publishers	<i>California Science</i>	K–6
Holt, Rinehart and Winston	<i>Holt California Science: Earth, Life, and Physical Science ©2007</i>	6, 7, 8
Houghton Mifflin	<i>Houghton Mifflin California Science ©2007</i>	K–6
It's About Time	<i>Investigating Earth Systems, InterActions in Physical Science</i>	6, 8
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill	<i>Macmillan/McGraw-Hill California Science</i>	K–6
McDougal Littell	<i>McDougal Littell California Middle School Science Series</i>	6, 7, 8
Pearson Prentice Hall	<i>Prentice Hall California Science Explorer: Focus on Earth, Life, and Physical Science</i>	6, 7, 8
Pearson Scott Foresman	<i>Scott Foresman California Science</i>	K–6

Districts may use their Instructional Materials Realignment Program (IMFRP) funds to purchase the programs named above. Specific information regarding the IMFRP can be found at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/imfrpintro.asp>. The SBE-adopted science instructional materials will be added to the Price List and Order Form (PLOF) maintained by the California Department of Education (CDE) after the final editions are received from the publishers in late January or early February 2007. You can access the PLOF at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ap1/plsearch.asp>. These materials will remain on the price list for the next six years.

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**2006 Science Primary Adoption  
(Continued)****Learning Resource Display Centers**

The science instructional materials are on display at the Learning Resource Display Centers (LRDCs). LRDC locations are posted on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/lrdc.asp>. The LRDCs serve as a resource to district and county staff in reviewing and evaluating newly adopted instructional materials for local selection and use. Many of the LRDCs will be holding publisher fairs for the 2006 SBE-adopted science instructional materials. For information regarding these fairs, contact the LRDCs directly.

**Health Standards**

Teachers throughout California can look forward to more guidance when it comes to teaching health education. Draft health education content standards for kindergarten through grade twelve have been developed and are expected to be approved by the State Board of Education this year.

The standards identify what students need to know and be able to do in health education. In October 2005, Assembly Bill (AB) 689, sponsored by the American Heart Association and co-sponsored by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell, was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger. AB 689 requires the State

Board of Education to adopt content standards for health education by March 2008, based on recommendations from the State Superintendent. Superintendent O'Connell appointed 19 highly respected and qualified educators from throughout California, including several classroom teachers, to serve on the California Health Education Standards Advisory Panel. This group met five times between March and August 2006 to develop draft health education standards. An online public review and comment period was held from July 14 to August 4, and two public hearings were held in early August—one in Sacramento and one in the Los Angeles area.

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**Health Standards  
(Continued)**

The health standards will shape the future direction of health education instruction for children and youths in California's public schools. The standards will provide school districts with fundamental tools for developing health education curriculum and for improving student achievement. The health education standards will help to ensure that all students in kindergarten through grade twelve receive high-quality health education instruction that provides them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to live a healthy lifestyle.

**New Oral Health Assessment Requirement**

A new law requires that by May 31 each year students in kindergarten (or first grade if it is their first year in public school) submit proof of an oral health assessment performed by a licensed dentist or other licensed or registered dental health professional. The implementation date of this new law was January 1, 2007, therefore impacting students currently in kindergarten or first grade.

Assembly Bill 1433, which established this requirement (*Education Code* Section 49452.8), was signed into law by the Governor on September 22, 2006. The law states that schools must send notification of the new assessment requirement to parents or legal guardians. A sample notification letter and standardized assessment form for local educational agency use is posted on the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn>. The form includes a section that parents or guardians may complete in order to be exempted from the oral health assessment requirement.

Each district is responsible for aggregating the data received from the pupils and for sending an annual report (by December 31) to its county office of education. The law states that the county office shall maintain the data in a manner that allows for release upon request.

If you have questions related to the implementation of *Education Code* Section 49452.8, please contact Donna Bezdecheck at [dbezdech@cde.ca.gov](mailto:dbezdech@cde.ca.gov) or by telephone at (916) 319-0283.

**Where Does HIV/AIDS Education Fit Into Elementary Schools?**

The California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act (California *Education Code* [EC] sections 51930-51939) requires students in grades seven to twelve to receive AIDS prevention instruction once during middle school and once during high school. The *Education Code* also allows schools to teach comprehensive sexual health education, but this instruction is not required by law. The law defines comprehensive sexual

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**Where Does HIV/AIDS Education  
Fit Into Elementary Schools?  
(Continued)**

health education as instruction that encompasses human development, sexuality, pregnancy, family planning, and sexually transmitted diseases. The purpose of the California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act is to provide every student with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect their sexual and reproductive health from unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Comprehensive sexual health education is permissible in the elementary grade levels. Local school boards and administrators determine the timing and the specific content of the lessons, which must comply with the *Education Code*. Instruction in elementary schools is usually focused upon human growth and development and puberty. Often, instruction provided in the elementary grade levels sets the stage, not only for HIV/AIDS prevention education, but for fulfilling the intent of this legislation. This instruction is crucial to preparing students for lessons that will protect their health.

Local educational agencies that offer a comprehensive sexual health education that includes instruction related to puberty must meet the seven tenets of the law outlined in *EC 51933*. The instruction must be age-appropriate, medically accurate, and made available to all learners regardless of primary language, race, gender, or disability. The instruction must also encourage students to communicate with their parents/guardians about human sexuality and should teach respect for marriage and committed relationships.

Teaching human growth and development can be challenging and rewarding. These lessons will influence important decisions for students. To obtain additional information, please visit the California Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/se/index.asp>.

**Evergreen School – Effort, Teamwork, and Communication**

Evergreen Elementary School, located in Cottonwood, California, is the first school in Tehama County to have achieved a score of 900 on the state's Academic Performance Index (API). Evergreen School increased 30 points on the API in 2006 to reach a score of 900. The school also successfully met the federal adequate yearly progress criteria in 2006. Bob Douglas, the superintendent of Tehama County schools, acknowledged how difficult it is to achieve an API of 900 and that this accomplishment came only through a coordinated schoolwide effort.

Evergreen Elementary School, located in a county covering an area of 500 square miles, is a rural school that serves students in kindergarten through grade four in the Evergreen Union Elementary School District. Evergreen Elementary serves its Title I population through a schoolwide program because 48 percent of its students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches. The school staff, who exemplify strong effort, teamwork, and communication, share the belief that "All children can learn, and we make the difference." The school was designated as a California Distinguished School in 2006 and received a Title I Academic Achievement Award for the third consecutive year.

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**Evergreen School – Effort, Teamwork  
and Communication  
(Continued)**

Debbie Oppezzo has been the principal of Evergreen School for the past six years. She strongly believes that everyone should feel valued and that students should feel that the school is a home away from home. It is important to Evergreen staff members how students feel about themselves. The principal describes Evergreen as a place with a positive climate where staff members have maintained high expectations for students and work tirelessly to help all students to be successful.

When California's state accountability system came into effect, Evergreen faced the challenge of aligning teaching with the academic content standards. The staff took steps to differentiate instruction, more effectively monitor student work, and analyze data. The staff also took on the challenge of ensuring that every child is taught within his or her learning zone. Teachers help students achieve grade-level standards and meet students' needs by scaffolding the curriculum. Early release days every Friday are designed for teacher collaboration.

In acknowledging the dedication of the Evergreen staff, the principal emphasized the importance of developing a partnership between home and school. A significant factor contributing to the overall success at Evergreen is the relationship the staff has built with Evergreen families. Teachers are willing to go above and beyond their job assignments. Nearly all teachers offer homework clubs for their own students in the after-school program that is funded through after-school intervention funds. Staff members are encouraged to attend workshops and training sessions conducted outside the area and, in turn, provide the training to their own peers at their school site.

Debbie Oppezzo's advice for school site and school district administrators is that they should be supportive of their staffs by becoming active participants in the classrooms. As the principal of the school, she serves as a partner in the learning process with a "can do" team attitude and finds that constant modeling leads to student success. Her direct involvement in the instructional program includes assisting teachers by running small groups, reading to students, co-teaching in the after-school program, serving as a cheerleader, and by keeping abreast of the issues that teachers face in their classrooms.

Ms. Oppezzo attributes sustaining high student academic achievement at Evergreen School to two key elements: (1) implementing effective practices and holding students accountable for their academic achievement; and (2) individualizing student work to reflect the skill level of the student, as well as ongoing monitoring of student work. Understanding that the "one-size-fits-all" approach to teaching will leave some students behind, Evergreen School has chosen to focus on differentiated instruction.

**2007 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools**

No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools is a national recognition program of the U.S. Department of Education. The 23-year-old program encourages states to nominate public kindergarten-through-grade-twelve schools that are either academically superior or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement. Private schools are nominated by the Council for American Private Education. Schools must fit one of the two following categories. The school's student body must consist of 40 percent or more disadvantaged students whose level of

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**2007 No Child Left Behind–  
Blue Ribbon Schools  
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proficiency places the school at the 60th percentile in English–language arts and mathematics, in the highest grade level tested when compared with other schools in the state. For all other schools, student performance must place the school at the 90th percentile in English–language arts and mathematics in the highest grade level tested when compared with other schools in the state.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell stated, "I nominated these schools for this national distinction because they have students across all demographic categories that have made impressive gains or scored at the top tier on California's standards-based tests. Everyone involved in these students' lives deserves credit for this honor. I applaud each of these nominated schools for implementing a successful combination of rigor, relevance, and relationships that is connecting with students and helping them to succeed."

All nominees, which are 2006 California Distinguished Schools, met the federal 2005 and 2006 adequate yearly progress (AYP) and the California Academic Performance Index (API) schoolwide and subgroup growth targets. The schools that showed the most schoolwide growth in each of the two categories described above were selected as nominees. Nominated schools will submit an application to the U.S. Department of Education during February. The weight of the review criteria will rest overwhelmingly on growth and achievement in English–language arts and mathematics over three years, including significant subgroups. The schools will also need to meet 2007 AYP and API schoolwide and subgroup targets next fall. Those that meet these final targets will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2007.

Each state may nominate a designated number of schools. California, with more than six million students and more than 9,300 public schools, is entitled to nominate 35 schools. Since there is no limit to the number of nominees that can be selected under the program, it is possible for all 35 nominees to be named Blue Ribbon schools. To obtain the list of schools, please visit [2007 Nominee Schools - Blue Ribbon Schools](http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html). For more information on the NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at [www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html).

**California Teachers of the Year for 2007**

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell named five remarkable educators as California Teachers of the Year for 2007 in November. O'Connell stated, "It is never easy to choose only five individuals from the vast number of capable, committed educators in California, but these extraordinary teachers symbolize what teaching can be and must be in order for all children to succeed," continuing that "These multi-faceted educators empower and inspire their students to overcome challenges and defeatist attitudes, resulting in higher achievement levels and a renewed appreciation for learning." Of the five, O'Connell nominated two elementary school teachers. Dawna Countryman of Saugus teaches fifth grade at Tesoro del Valle Elementary School in Saugus Union School District in Valencia, and Charles Reynes teaches science to fourth and fifth graders at five elementary schools in the Castro Valley Unified School District.

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**California Teachers of the  
Year for 2007  
(Continued)**

The California Teachers of the Year program was started in 1972 to pay tribute to the state's educators, the growing complexity of challenges that confront California's schools, and the need to promote collaboration among teachers to meet those challenges. California continues to face a critical teacher shortage. The program plays a pivotal role in drawing new people into the field.



The Superintendent selects five people each year who best represent California's teachers and symbolize the profession's contributions to quality education by focusing public attention on noteworthy accomplishments of teachers. The competition is open to educators who teach prekindergarten through grade twelve. County offices of education nominate winners of their regional Teacher of the Year competition. A state selection committee reviews the candidates' applications and conducts site visits to evaluate the teachers' rapport with

students, classroom environment, presentation skills, use of teaching methods, and other criteria. Following interviews held in Sacramento, the State Superintendent then selects the awardees. The awardees were honored in Sacramento at a dinner on January 8, 2007, made possible by donations from corporate sponsors. Ten semi-finalists were also honored.

**Calendar of Events****February**

February 8–11, 2007

[California Association of Teachers of English](#)

48th Annual CATE Convention

Radisson Hotel and Convention Center, Fresno, California

Pauline Sahakian, [psahakian@unmerced.edu](mailto:psahakian@unmerced.edu), (559) 222-6916

**March**

March 1–3, 2007

[Computer Using Educators, Inc.](#)

Computer Using Educators Conference 2007

Convention Center, Palm Springs, California

Mike Lawrence, [cueinc@cue.org](mailto:cueinc@cue.org), (510) 814-6630

March 11–13, 2007

[California Department of Education](#)

19th Annual California Partnership Academies Conference

Town & Country Hotel, San Diego, California

Barbara Weiss, [bweiss@cde.ca.gov](mailto:bweiss@cde.ca.gov), (916) 319-0481

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## Calendar of Events (Continued)

March 14–17, 2007

[California Association for Bilingual Education](http://www.bilingualeducation.org)

32nd Annual Conference - Educating Every Student: Investing in Tomorrow-Today

Convention Center, Long Beach, California

Delma Chwilinski, [info@bilingualeducation.org](mailto:info@bilingualeducation.org), (626) 814-4441

## April

April 12–14, 2007

[California School Employees Association](http://www.csea.com)

10th Annual California Paraeducator Conference: Decades of Excellence

Convention Center & Sheraton Grand Hotel, Sacramento, California

Carla R. Mitchler, [crmitchler@csea.com](mailto:crmitchler@csea.com), (408) 433-1288

April 16–17, 2007

[California Department of Education](http://www.cde.ca.gov)

Title I State Annual Conference

Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa, Costa Mesa, California

Anne Just, Title I Policy and Partnerships Office, [AAA@cde.ca.gov](mailto:AAA@cde.ca.gov), (916) 319-0854

## Resources

Programmatic and fiscal resources to build, implement, and sustain quality before-and-after school programs, including school-age care and other out-of-school opportunities for children and youths are posted on the California Department of Education Web site at

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/index.asp>.

The California Department of Education (CDE) offers information regarding student testing on its Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/index.asp>.

The CDE also offers information regarding curriculum frameworks, the adoption cycle for instructional materials in kindergarten through grade eight, and the academic content standards on its Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/index.asp>.

*Check It Out!* is a publication designed to help school districts and schools assess the state of their school libraries and the policies that support and guide them. The guide is posted on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb/checkitout.asp>.

The 2006 *Educational Resources Catalog* is available on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/index.asp>. The catalog includes a description of CDE publications and resources and information on how to order the documents.

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**Resources  
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The National Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) has posted several resources for parents and educators on its Web site at <http://www.pta.org>. *Our Children* newsletter provides parents with resources and information about how to make households, neighborhoods, schools, and communities better places for children. The newsletter is posted on the PTA Web page at [http://www.pta.org/pr\\_our\\_children\\_magazine.html](http://www.pta.org/pr_our_children_magazine.html) and is written in English and in Spanish.

Answers to frequently asked questions about pandemic flu that provide information about how schools can prepare for a possible pandemic are posted on the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/index.asp>.

The United States government has posted information about avian and pandemic flu to help people to become informed and prepared on its Web site at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>. The resources include planning checklists, questions and answers, and general information about pandemic flu.

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) has prepared a 35-minute DVD entitled *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness in California* that provides important and timely information on preparing for the threat of avian influenza and the risk of a human influenza pandemic. Additional information about the briefing is posted on the CDHS Web site at [http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/izgroup/diseases/pandemic\\_flu.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/izgroup/diseases/pandemic_flu.htm).

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section has introduced the “Harvest of the Month” tool kit to encourage students to increase their consumption of a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and to engage in physical activity every day. The “Harvest of the Month” tool kit is available on the CDHS Web site at <http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/>.

The California School Garden Network has provided resources for schools about how to create and sustain school gardens. Visit the Web site at <http://www.csgn.org/>.

The California Children’s 5 A Day–Power Play! Campaign works to educate, motivate, and empower children from ages nine to eleven to eat fruits and vegetables and to be physically active. The campaign produces a variety of materials that are research-based, educator-friendly, and appealing to children. Schools with at least 50 percent of their students enrolled in the free and reduced-price meal program can request free copies of the campaign educational and promotional materials through their 5 A Day–Power Play! Campaign regional coordinator. To locate your regional coordinator, visit the California 5 A Day–Power Play! Web site at [http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/powerplay/pp\\_regional\\_contacts.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/powerplay/pp_regional_contacts.htm). Materials include printed copies of the *School Idea and Resource Kits* for fourth and fifth grades and student workbooks for each participating student as well as *The Community Youth Organization Idea and Resource Kit* for after-school and summer programs. Promotional items reinforce educational activities conducted with children. The *Kids! Get Cookin’* cookbook is also available online and includes recipes to help kids to discover the power that fruits and vegetables have to give them more energy for school and sports. The kits are also downloadable at [http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/powerplay/pp\\_resources.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/powerplay/pp_resources.htm) and will soon be available for purchase by those schools that do not qualify.

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